

USDA NRCS

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USDA NRCS ANNOUNCES SIGN-UP FOR 2006 CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

Jackson, MS, Feb. 2, 2006 — USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist Homer L. Wilkes today announced the 2006 Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up will be held Feb. 13, 2006 to March 31, 2006, in the Tibbee Creek and Pickwick Lake watersheds.

"NRCS is committed to providing a fair and equitable program that rewards Mississippi's leading conservationists," said Wilkes. "This year, applicants can sign-up prior to most planting decisions. We see this as a way to encourage more conservation leaders to apply for the program."

To be eligible for CSP, most of a producer's agricultural operation must fall within the boundaries of the selected watershed. Applications that meet CSP's minimum requirements as set forth in the amendment to the Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register March 25, 2005, will be placed in enrollment categories. Categories will be funded in alphabetical order until funds are exhausted. The CSP amendment to the Interim Final Rule is available for viewing at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>. Producers begin the application process by filling out a self-assessment to determine if they meet the basic qualifications for CSP. Self-assessment workbooks are available in hard copy at USDA Service Centers within the watersheds, and electronically at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>. After completing the self-assessment producers should schedule an appointment to discuss their application with the NRCS local staff to determine if they meet specific CSP eligibility requirements.

USDA announced preliminary selection of the watersheds for fiscal year 2006 based on the President's budget request. Based on available funding, CSP will be offered in 60 watersheds across all 50 states, the Caribbean and Guam. The sign-up will only include those producers who do not have an existing CSP contract.

2006 marks the third CSP sign-up. The privately-owned land currently enrolled in CSP covers nearly 11 million acres in 220 eligible watersheds in all 50 states and the Caribbean Area.

CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. Payments are made using three tiers of conservation contracts. CSP will be available any year on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows.

Additional information about CSP is available from your local USDA Service Center or at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

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